

Having Difficult Conversations

Summary:

- Determine a time to have the meeting.
- Plan what you will say; what is the problem, what is the resolution.
- Stick to the facts; acknowledge the issues directly, however, do not accuse the individual.
- Allow the person to respond, do not interrupt.
- Focus on a solution; try to determine common areas of agreement.
- Determine action to be taken and when there will be follow-up on next steps.

Information You Need to Know:

Believe it or not conflict and disagreement are normal. Conflicts actually can be healthy as it can expose you to a different perspective. But in order to have a successful outcome you need to ensure the timing is right. Timing, after all, is everything! Sometimes individuals need to cool off before having a conversation, make sure that you and the other party are able to speak about the issue. Prepare ahead of time, know what you want to say, what outcome you would like and remember the point of having a conversation is to resolve the conflict. Make sure you present facts and are open to hearing the individual's perspective. Listen to what they are saying and do not interrupt. Conflict brings out emotions; thus the other party may vent and express their feelings. However, if either party begins to lose control or the discussion begins to get unproductive, do not be afraid to stop having the conversation. You can always meet again at a later time. Stay focused on coming to a solution. Determine if there are any common areas that you both agree. If you are able to come to a resolution, make sure you both agree on what action will be taken and when there will be additional follow-up.

Peer Insight:

We want to hear from you. Do you have any suggestions on how to reward and/or recognize employees? Do you have any tips or best practice ideas? Please share your ideas with ITA at ITABestPractices@mail.doc.gov

At this time there are no best practices from ITA Leaders.

For more information on this topic check out these resources:

Web sites:

[Conflict Resolution](#)

[Techniques for Changing Minds](#)

[Keys to Successful Conflict Resolution](#)

[Resolving Office Conflicts](#)

[How to Have a Difficult Conversation](#)

[Managing Conflict](#)

[Managing Conflict – University of California - Berkeley](#)

Books:

Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen

Based on fifteen years of research at the Harvard Negotiation Project, *Difficult Conversations* walks you through a proven step-by-step approach for how to have your toughest conversations with less stress and more success. It shows you how to prepare yourself; how to start the conversation without defensiveness; and how to keep it constructive and focused regardless of how the other person responds.

Getting to YES Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In by Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton

Getting to YES offers a concise, step-by-step, proven strategy for coming to mutually acceptable agreements in every sort of conflict-whether it involves parents and children, neighbors, bosses and employees, customers or corporations, tenants or diplomats. Based on the work of the Harvard Negotiation Project, a group that deals continually with all levels of negotiation and conflict resolution from domestic to business to international.